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**CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFRICA
CHALLENGES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY,
ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY, AND THE
SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

BY

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ABSTRACT

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There were a lot of expectations for a stable world at the end of the cold war. While this is generally true, Africa has experienced more devastating conflicts in the post cold war era. Past efforts to conclusively end these conflicts have proved futile. This paper will give a brief background of the external intervention's influence on the continent's evolution. It will discuss in detail the common causes of the conflicts, highlight the roles of external players, the challenges and roles of the international community, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the sub-regional organizations in their resolution.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	III
PREFACE.....	VII
CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFRICA.....	1
BACKGROUND	1
CAUSES OF CONFLICT AND THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL PLAYERS.....	2
ETHNICITY	3
UNDEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE	6
POOR ECONOMIC POLICIES	9
ARMS PROLIFERATION.....	11
RELIGION.....	12
CHALLENGES TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY	13
CHALLENGES TO THE OAU AND SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.....	15
CONCLUSION.....	17
ENDNOTES.....	19
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	25

PREFACE

This study is a result of keen interest in the resolution of conflicts in Africa. The study provides information and stimulates discussion on the causes of the conflicts in Africa and how the international community could augment local efforts to find permanent solutions to these conflicts. The stability and economic growth of Africa would not only be in the interest of the Africans, but the world at large. As the world moves towards globalization, Africa is likely to remain behind unless permanent solutions are found to the endemic conflicts awash on the continent. The study concludes with a plea that while the problems of Africa would best be solved by Africans themselves, the international community should not abandon the continent as its will to address the problems is often hampered by lack of resources.

My appreciation goes to Ambassador Marshall McCallie, Colonel Thompson Dempsey and my project advisor DR. Steve Metz for all the assistance and guidance rendered to me in putting this study together. I dedicate the work to my family, my wife Catherine, children Diana K, Diana N, Marjorie, Brenda Julius and Berinda who endured my absence for the year I was on course.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN AFRICA

CHALLENGES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, ORGANIZATIONS OF AFRICAN UNITY, AND THE SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

BACKGROUND

Africa's central position on the globe could be interpreted as having negatively contributed to its development. From the 15th Century until the 19th Century, the continent saw the invasion by the slave traders from Europe, across the Atlantic and Arab lands depleting it of millions of men and women purportedly to deliver them from scourge of ignorance, superstition and squalor.¹ Colonization was presented as a duty towards a race still in the infancy of mankind with no blessing of the art of good government. This was immediately followed by Christianity, which was disguised as spiritual progress for this disadvantaged race. In many cases the colonizers literally destroyed whatever traditional and social systems found on the ground. Others like the British applied indirect rule through societies that they projected as superior to others.

The scramble for Africa resulted in the continent being divided among the world super powers at the time. Colonies in form of countries were mapped out and borders drawn without due consideration to ethnic diversities of the communities. A case in point is Sudan. The black animist southerners were forced by the border demarcation under the rule of the Arab Islamic north; two communities with entirely parallel cultures and beliefs. Misalignment of these groups with political boundaries provided a fertile ground for ethnic confrontation. In Nigeria, a country now seen as a model in Africa on the road to democratic governance, the effects of the arbitrary divide has been rekindled. Reporting on the current clashes between the *Yorubas* and the *Hausas* which has so far claimed 200 lives, the BBC report of 26 November 1999 said in part, "In fact some have never forgiven the British colonialists for throwing together myriad ethnic and religious groups, and then leaving them to try and get along with each other".²

World war veterans and a few elite like Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta advocated political independence. In some countries like Ghana and Tanzania political pressure led to independence, while in others like Kenya and Zimbabwe it required the use of arms, fighting bitter wars before independence could be granted. These were considered legitimate wars whose effects were not as destructive as the current conflicts.

The mid 20th Century saw many African states gaining independence one way or the other. As the continent got to grips with de-colonization, the world was engulfed in the ideological war between the East and West. As the big wigs struggled to acquire camps of influence, Africa became the "victim of the clash of carnivorous ideologies."³

Torn between the superpowers, some of the countries decided to stay out of the ideological game. Ambassador David Passage observed, "Africans repeatedly offended by overbearing and sometimes even oafish European business and occasionally government hoopla, which painstakingly and

frequently painfully reminded Africans of their continuing dependence on the former metropolitan powers, opted in the main for non-alignment.⁴ There is perhaps no continent that has suffered so much from the solicitude and pontification of others than Africa. The continent has had a history of unwelcome interference from state, non-state and extra state actors, stifling all attempts at economic and democratic progress.

The collapse of the USSR and the demise of the cold war did not change the equation, instead the continent has been engulfed in one conflict after another some resulting in catastrophes beyond human imagination. The continent's hitherto strategic position is no longer appealing and many western analysts feel the continent should be left to solve its own problems. Some of these conflicts have been dealt with, but if what is going on in Nigeria is anything to go by, then Leonard Brehn could be right when he observes in his book, *Liberia, The War of Horror*.

In frankness, the Liberian civil and guerilla war topped and surpassed all other wars (by 1990) in form and character, in intensity, in depravity, in savagery, in barbarism, and horror. As far as the men behind the war were concerned, one should be forewarned that the world could be breeding a new species of mankind with no contrite hearts, with no compassion, with no regard to law and order and whose ambition in life have no bounds at the peril of others. It has started in Liberia but one should be aware that there are many Charles Taylors and Prince Johnsons, the new species of mankind around not only in Liberia but other places especially Africa.⁵

This paper will examine the causes of conflicts manifested through ethnicity, undemocratic governance, poor economic policies, arms proliferation and religion. Now that the ideological war is over and the race for colonial dominance is no more, Africa must go through a renaissance if it's to join the rest of the progressive world. Most of the conflicts have external dimensions, and although the effects of these conflicts do not directly impact on the international community, the second and third order effects do. The paper will discuss the challenges paused to the international community, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the sub-regional organizations on the continent for their resolution. The paper focuses on Sub-Saharan Africa where the problems have been more rife.

CAUSES OF CONFLICT AND THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL PLAYERS

As predicted by Leonard Brehn, Africa has witnessed some of the bloodiest conflicts in the last half of the 20th Century. Before the dust settled on the Rwanda massacres, the Sierra Leone amputations of innocent civilians by rebels hit the headlines. Apart from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) conflict, which has attracted external interventions of Rwanda and Uganda on one side, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia on the other, and the Ethiopia/Eritrea war, there has been few noticeable inter state conflicts after the cold war. The most devastating conflicts have been intra state but many of them have external dimensions in form of material and financial support from external sources. There is evidence that the rebellion in northern Uganda by the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) is fully supported by Sudan, which has provided it with sanctuary and arms for the last 13 years. This group had by the end of 1999 abducted and forcibly recruited 3,000 children in its ranks.⁶ It is highly believed that both Liberia and

Burkina Faso support the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone. Through the sale of diamonds estimated to fetch as much as \$ 300 million per year, the rebels are able to acquire weapons from Eastern Europe with the help of Liberia and Burkina Faso.⁷

These conflicts present a bleak future for the continent as painted in the words of the Algerian President during the 1999 Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit when he said, "Africa is in a dreadful mess. The continent remains isolated and removed from the forces that are pushing the rest of the world. It is mired in internal conflicts and wars, is hesitant to move forward economically and in the process of sinking in debt and backwardness."⁸ The kill rates since 1990 has so far estimated at Sudan 1.5 million people, Rwanda 1 million, Angola 500,000, Liberia 200,000 and Sierra Leone 15,000. In comparison the Balkans has recorded 400,000 since in the same period.⁹

Although each of the conflicts has a unique character and therefore merits its own approach for resolution, most of them bear some similarities. The inter state conflicts usually subscribe to a single cause, like Ethiopia/Eritrea war over the Badme area, but the intra state conflicts are normally as a result of combination of factors born by societies for relatively long time. It is imperative therefore that for the prevention, management, and resolution of these conflicts, the causes are addressed. The present approach is to respond to the conflicts after they have reached alarming levels with humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping forces. This could be equated to "treatment of symptoms" which does not produce lasting solutions to these conflicts. Both external players and internal weaknesses exemplify the turmoil on the continent; it would therefore require both local and external involvement if permanent solutions were to be found.

ETHNICITY

Virtually all African intra state conflicts draw to some degree on ethnic differentiation within the concerned state.¹⁰ The situations are often aggravated by the manipulation of these differences by the country leadership or external players. Manipulation of these societies' differences dates back to the colonial period when they were employed to entrench colonial control. This paper will highlight the situations in Rwanda, Uganda, Angola and Liberia.

At the time of Rwanda colonization by the Belgians, the *Tutsi*, *Hutu*, and *Twa* societies lived side by side. At the completion of the colonization process in 1931 the colonizers had projected the *Tutsi* as superior among the three. The seeds of animosity were thus sown. Msgr Classe, the bishop who arrived at the turn of the century and whose advice the Belgians deeply respected, went ahead and advised the Belgian Government of the superiority of *Tutsi* whom he portrayed as the most intelligent, active and most progressive.¹¹ Indeed by the end of the Belgian presence in Rwanda in 1959, out of the 45 chiefs, 43 were *Tutsi*.¹² It is of interest to note that the Belgians stood by in this year when Gregoire Kaibanda's Movement *Democratique Rwanda/Parti-du Mouvement et de l'Emancipation Hutu*, led a revolution against the *Tutsi*. Many ended in exile in Uganda from where they struck back in 1990-94. The Rwanda war of 1990-94 reversed the order but the indicators from the region are that the world has not seen the last of

this conflict. The *Hutus* in DRC and Burundi are a discontented lot and will strike back at the earliest opportunity. Unfortunately, both the international community and the current Rwanda administration have given little attention to the reconciliation process between these two ethnic groups.

In Liberia, through the Whig Party the *Americo-Liberians* exercised "black colonization" when they suppressed the indigenous Liberians in an attempt to pacify then subjugate them to their rule and authority. With a population of 1.8 Liberians, only 300 families or so of the *Americo-Liberians* formed the elite class, totally suppressing the native *Krahn*, *Mano*, and *Gio* Liberians.¹³ The situation however did not improve after the coup by Samuel Doe in 1980, as it was a "mere change of guards." After a few years in power, Samuel Doe transformed the *Krahn* into masters while the *Mano*, the *Gio* and the *Americo-Liberians* were persecuted. This created bad blood among the groups leading to Charles Taylor and Prince Johnson organizing their tribes to defend themselves. Each group marked the other for elimination.¹⁴ The results of this conflict were highly documented. However it's debatable whether enough time and resources have been committed in the post conflict era to the healing process between the tribes to avoid a repeat of the situation.

Angola is another example of ethnic manipulation. The Jonas Savimbi's *Uvimbundu* tribe from the south has all along been considered by the Portuguese as only fit for casual labor with no flair for leadership roles. The leadership roles are only reserved for the *Portuguese-Angolas* from the north; this has been one of the areas of contention.

In Uganda, the divide was made along lines of employment. The northerners considered more martial and war like were to serve in the military, the police and prisons services while the southerners considered to be soft and gentle were for "white collar" jobs. This arrangement created a social imbalance implanting a north/south dichotomy which to date provides ground for conflict in the country.¹⁵

The illiteracy levels amplify these ethnic differences: 60% of the Africans are illiterate, and the number of school going age children range from anywhere between 25% to 45% in some countries.¹⁶ Societies with such a low level of education and exposure have a low level of understanding issues beyond their local communities and therefore easy to manipulate along ethnic sentiments. For 13 years in Uganda, Alice Lakwena and Joseph Kony, believed to have supernatural powers, have waged a rebellion against the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government to purportedly redeem the northern tribes from possible extinction by the southerners. Civilian have at times been pitted against government troops with mere stones believed to have similar effects as grenades once blessed by Kony or Lakwena.

The absence of a common language in most of the countries has further complicated matters. Apart from Tanzania where *Swahili* was instituted as the language of communication throughout the country, and some former French colonies which commonly use French most African countries have as many languages as the tribes. Uganda, the size of Britain, has 40 different tribes, each tribe with its own language. Though some languages like *Luganda* are widely spoken all Ugandans do not understand it. Communication breakdown is a common phenomenon.

However, the homogenous nature of Somalia, where 90% of the population have the same cultures, speak the same language and have the same beliefs merits a study of its own. The clan differences do not satisfactorily explain the turmoil in that country since clan lineage is as old as Somalia itself. What is clear though is the amplification of the problem by Somalia political entrepreneurs, merchants and petty bourgeoisie who have been this as a chance to make a fortune.¹⁷ Control of the ports, airports and markets where looted goods and items like *khat*—a mild narcotic, are sold have become the points of contention as they guarantee steady incomes for whoever is in charge.

Some of the merchants like Usman Ato crossed the line and became clan leaders in anticipation of controlling both the political and economic machinery at the end of the conflict. The importation into Somalia of highly sophisticated military arsenal during the cold war amplified the otherwise traditional clan feuds, which were originally settled through the traditional clan systems. This same scenario is emerging in the DRC. Economic interest by both local and external players is fueling the conflict beyond imaginable levels. For example, the First International Bank of Grenada and its implementing partners the Union Reserve System signed a US \$16 million contract with the rebel leader Wamba Dia Wamba of Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD-ML). The contract gives the Grenada bank mining concessions and authority to control the banking system in the expected new Congo.¹⁸

Tanzania provides a good example of where with the absence of manipulation ethnic diversity does not count. A country of 120 different ethnic tribes, with diverse religions and cultures of Arab, Indian and indigenous black Africans, it has remained an island of stability as conflicts rocked its neighbors. This could be partly attributed to:

- a. The colonial influence was not as pronounced in Tanzania as in other countries where indirect rule by the colonial masters promoted ethnic rivalry.
- b. During the time the country was under socialism, the late Julius Nyerere ensured the use of a common language Swahili which to date has remained the country's identity.
- c. Poor as the country was, the few resources were relatively shared among the Tanzanians through the *Ujamaa* (African form of Socialism) system. Though Nyerere failed to follow developmental economic systems for the country, he resisted corruption and repression. His leadership still ranks among the most clean on the continent.

As much as ethnicity plays a major role in generation of conflicts, it is not the sole factor behind all the conflicts on the continent. In his article, *Ethnicity as an Explanation, Ethnicity as Excuse*, Paul Goble writes,

First not all ethnic assertiveness leads to ethnic conflict, although most may. Moreover, in some cases, it may even lead to amelioration of ethnic and other conflicts by resolving issues that had agitated society. Second ethnicity is in no case the only issue involved in such conflicts. It may frame them, and even justify them but ethnicity is about access to resources, psychic and otherwise.¹⁹

This partly explains why the denial of these resources to some sectors of society, have resulted in radical reformist groups seeking to change the status quo. Vivid examples are the *Forces Armes du*

Nord (FAN) in Chad in 1979, Uganda's National Resistance Movement (NRM) in 1986, and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991. Redrawing of the borders have been floated as a solution to the ethnic conflicts, however this would only open a Pandora box for the continent and would be a typical example of treating symptoms. The solution lies in the African leaders understanding and accommodating the cultural diversities of their individual countries.

UNDEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

As already seen the, first bunch of African leaders after the liberation struggles for independence were mainly world war veterans or from the elite who had been educated through the religious institutions. Among the notable ones are: Kwame Nkrumah, of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Patrice Lumumba of Congo and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Seko Toure of Guinea. This first crop of African leaders took the reins from the colonial masters who had all along enforced their rule through the use of the gun or had enforced it through indirect rule by promoting some ethnic tribes over others.

Those who managed to wrestle the power from the colonialists either fell back to their ethnic groups as a means of ensuring their stay in power or followed the footsteps of their predecessors and used force and draconian rules to enforce control. Presidents like Mobutu of Congo and Kaibanda of Rwanda are good examples. The inexperienced leaders grappled with building national political systems including designing constitutions, which could meet their national requirements, a problem still faced by many countries to date. In cases like Ghana, where the British made attempts at building these institutions, the few elite who could interpret the constitutions manipulated them to their advantage. This situation pertains today in many African countries.

Multi party democracy was totally strange and in most cases the formed parties reflected ethnic or religious biases. For example, in Uganda the Democratic Party was and has remained to date a Catholic enclave while the Uganda People's Congress is Protestant and predominantly northern and eastern based.²⁰

As the leaders struggled to understand the mechanics of managing societies larger than their ethnic tribes while maintaining control of their "hard earned" power, they were invaded by the ideological scramble for spheres of influence by the West and the East. Many leaders opted for alliance with the East to escape the talons of colonialism. Apart from the fact that the East had assisted a number of them during the liberation struggles, the socialist system provided a better window for staying in power longer since democratic governance was not part of its agenda. Leaders like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Patrice Lumumba of Congo, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Milton Obote of Uganda were confessed socialists.

The alliance to the ideological camps ensured "protection" of the regime. Much as there was dissatisfaction in some countries on how the political business was being conducted, they were suppressed by this support. This to some extent kept the conflicts in check. As observed by Ayu Funmi

Olinisakin, "this protectionism by the ideological powers fueled the conflict but simultaneously controlled their explosive potential."²¹

Fearing losing total control of the continent to the creeping socialism, the West sought alternatives to the crop of socialist leaders. This was found in the countries' militaries sparking off a spate of coups between 1966 to the late 80s. The militaries were encouraged and in some cases assisted to takeover governments as a check to the spread of socialism. John Stockwell a former CIA officer gives testimony to this in his book, *In Search of Enemies*. Explaining the circumstance that led to the Ghana coup in 1966 he writes:

The Accra station was nevertheless encouraged by HQs to maintain contact with dissidents of the Ghana Army for the purpose of gathering intelligence on their activities. It was a generous budget and maintained intimate contact with the plotters as the coup hatched. So close was the station involvement that it was able to coordinate the recovery of some classified Soviet military equipment by the U.S. as the coup took place. Inside the CIA HQs the Accra station was given full, if unofficial, credit for the eventual coup.²²

The coup in Uganda is highly believed to have had the British and Israel support to forestall the country joining of the socialist camp of Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique, a move Obote had indicated in his pronouncements of "move to the left" in 1970. In Central African Republic, the French wary of Darko's friendship with the East encouraged a coup, which was eventually executed by General Bedel Bokassa. He was later overthrown in another coup with full backing of the French and replaced with Darko in 1979.²³

In addition to the coups, the ideological camps supported dissidents, who would oppose regimes not in favor of their ideology. The Mengistu rebellion and eventual overthrow of Emperor Selassie's kingship in Ethiopia was Russia's handwork. Despite the regime's violation of human rights, the Russians supported it until it collapsed under pressure from EPRDF in 1991.

The support of Angola's Jonathan Savimbi by the West in a bid to forestall Russian influence in the region is an open secret. John Stockwell writes:

We could give FNLA and UNITA enough support to win by going quickly with tactical air support and advisers; we could take Luanda and put the MPLA out of business before the Soviets could react. Otherwise if we weren't willing to do that, we would further U.S. interest by staying out of the conflict. The middle ground, feeling out way along with small amounts of aid would only escalate the war and get U.S. far out on a fragile limb. It would help neither the Angola people nor the U.S.²⁴

Although the project seems to have no relevancy now, the effects of the conflict will for a long time remain telling on the Angolans. The impact of these interventions amplified the already existing individual leaders' weaknesses creating a gloomy scenario for the continent. Stockwell analyzes the impact of these interventions and concludes, "By 1975 they (Africans) had learned painful lessons about competition of West and East in Africa. Almost to a country they had been exploited in civil wars, coups, arms races and competitive aid programs by the Soviet Union, various European, Asian and Latin American countries and the U.S."²⁵

Under these conditions there was total break down of law and order in most of the African countries. Social institutions like the judiciary, the civil police, the legislature were completely dismantled or rendered ineffective, the press was muzzled and the economies raked. Accountability and checks and balances in government institutions became foreign. The political parties, most of them in their infancy, were banned stagnating the process of political development.

Failing to de-link themselves from ethnic sentiments, most of the governments resorted to use of government machinery to appease their kinsmen. Samuel Doe consolidated his position by appointing only *the Krahns* in positions of responsibility both in the government and the army.²⁶ *Hausas* in Nigeria to date hold the highest military ranks since most of the past leaders came from the north, the West Nilers in Uganda held almost all the top government positions during the Amin's era.

As already observed, the ideological masters found themselves in a dilemma after their commitment to these regimes. Much as they deplored the abuse of human rights, which characterized most of the regimes, they continued to support them in defense of ideology other than values.

Ambassador David Passage agrees with this position when he confesses:

Although the U.S. achieved some transitory advantage in terms of cold war stand off with the USSR, (and I share with others some responsibility for the policy decisions that led to such U.S. involvement with this dismal assortment of dictators, thugs and murderers) it is hard to see that Africa or Africans gained much by the association (although their leaders individually did). In Liberia, Sudan (before Bashir overthrew Nimier), Ethiopia and Zaire the U.S. has absolutely nothing to show for the several billions of dollars it provided in economic aid and military assistance over nearly three decade period.²⁷

Qualifying Ambrose Bierce's definition of the military as "class of non-producers who defend a country by devouring everything likely to tempt an enemy to invade" the military regimes fared worst of all.²⁸ Conducting government affairs for private advantages, the regimes of Mobutu, Idi Amin, Bedel Bokassa and Sani Abacha to mention but a few left their countries bleeding. Millions and millions of government money was salted away in foreign accounts, recent reports revealed that Sani Abacha of Nigeria had as much as US \$550 million in his personal accounts which were recently frozen by the Swiss banks.²⁹

The question of dissent in some of the countries was inevitable. The collapse of the Soviet Union, which greatly impacted on the countries it supported, flared some of the conflicts. Matters were made worse when the donor community resorted to conditional release of donor funds to encourage political reforms in the former Soviet camps.³⁰

The biting economies weakened the systems thus encouraging both armed and unarmed dissidents. Capitalizing on these weaknesses, leaders like Hussein Habre of Chad, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia and Laurent Kabila of DRC, turned to the population, mobilizing them against the autocratic and dictatorial regimes. The unanswered question however, is whether the new leadership will bring fundamental changes in the political arena to promote stable and democratic institutions that can stand the test of time.

The democratic process through multi party democracy in those countries, which survived the wave of military revolutions, still leaves a lot to be desired. Countries like Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Botswana, and Kenya and Nigeria took up the challenge. By 1996 it is estimated that 80% of Sub Saharan Africa had taken to democratization.³¹ The democratic process is still affected with the traditional problems among which include:

- a. Unable to extricate themselves of ethnic sentiments, the new parties that mushroomed subscribe to ethnicity and religion. Kenya is a good example with 17 parties formed to oppose Kenya National Union (KANU). The Democratic Party for the *Kikuyu*, Ford Kenya for the *Abaluhya*, National Democratic Party for the *Jaluo* and so on. Commenting on this state of affairs, a British member of the Labour Party, Mr. Tony Worthington said, "such parties have nothing to offer other than looking for opportunities to plug their own communities into the state milking machines."³²
- b. The new "Turks" in the political arena, have failed to break through against the "political dinosaurs" due to prohibitive expenses involved. As Professor Mazrui observed, in many African countries, presidential power is a zero-sum game.³³ The incumbent melding power and state structure will dedicate all their resources to ensuring that the opposition has little chance of emerging victorious, while maintaining sometimes unsuccessfully a facade of free and fair elections. The international community has often embraced this cosmetic democracy even where the political ground is evidently not level. For example, of the 28 countries that took to democratization since 1996, 22 resulted in the incumbent retaining power despite varying degrees of unpopularity.³⁴

The international community/donors financing these elections could go a step further to ensure meaningful elections by prevailing over the incumbent governments to level the political fields. The common rhetoric, which often follows the elections, "In the prevailing circumstances the elections were free and fair" is a mockery of the electoral process.

The international community could look more in the pre-election period and conduct aggressive civic education, and community sensitization to arm the communities with the knowledge of the issues at hand. The ad-hoc methods often implemented through government machinery are counter productive. The involvement of bodies like the International Republican Institute, the Institute for Strategic Studies and the National Democratic Institute, which have provided practical assistance to civic and political leaders in upcoming democracies, is a move in the right direction. The activities of the National Democratic Institute in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria and Kenya among others could go a long way in providing the required expertise in the new democracies.

POOR ECONOMIC POLICIES

Most African economies have remained agrarian. The colonial legacy has to date ensured a tag of the economies to the former colonial powers with the continent remaining the main producer of raw materials for the industries in those countries. Even in countries like DRC and Namibia whose economies

depend on minerals, the mining concessions are held by foreign companies, which make no effort to plough back some of what they reap from the countries.

Agriculture has remained predominantly subsistence with the hand hoe providing little room for increased income. The large-scale farms are mainly owned by the colonial remnants like in Zimbabwe or the state like the tea estates in Kenya. For example in a country like Uganda, agriculture contributes about 44% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Unless such a country can diversify its economy, its chances of development are slim.³⁵

Unlike Europe where the population moved from total dependence on land to industries, African communities have remained fully dependent on land at subsistence level. The unrealistic tariffs imposed on African processed and semi-processed products by international trade arrangements have suffocated all efforts for Africa to add value to its products. For example, it has proved to be more profitable exporting unprocessed coffee or cocoa, than the same product when processed. These trade imbalances need to be addressed and rectified to enable the continent equal opportunities in the global economic world.

The economic stagnation has greatly impacted on the population, which have tremendously grown in the last century. With little progress on the farmland, urban migration in search of better opportunities is the order of the day in most of the countries. With life proving more harder than what they anticipate while migrating, the unemployed youths become easy prey of those willing to recruit them in rebel camps. The social fabric which otherwise ensured social stability is broken down and so are the morals. Evidence of this is seen in Sierra Leone where youths have been recruited on the promise of using whatever comes out of the diamond mines.

Many countries had their economic activities tagged to the government. This was mainly by the use of cooperative societies through which governments regulated and legislated the purchase and sell of farm produce. Bodies like the Kenya National Cereals and Produce Board and the Coffee Marketing Board in Uganda until recently controlled all the produce marketing activities of the countries. The result was "neo-parrimonialism" where the leadership obtains loyalty by sacrificing both the state and economic activities to their clients.³⁶ In the absence of accountability, these bodies ended up a haven of corruption and mismanagement of funds often borrowed from external sources. The arrangement also stunted the growth of middle class societies among the African countries.

Coupled with the above is the bad education system which has all along stressed the training of job seekers. The job slots have not grown at the same rate as the populations, employment opportunities are often determined by ethnic or religious sentiments. For example, Tanzania puts out 700,000 college graduates and only 40,000 can be absorbed by the formal sector.³⁷ This has not only stagnated development including technological advancement, but has also led to the "brain drain" of the few trained manpower which the continent badly need. An estimated 30,000 Ph.D. holders from Sub-Saharan Africa are suspected to be either in Europe, the Far East or the U.S.³⁸ The economic systems did not favor the growth of a middle class society. The absence of a strong middle class has left the political scene to be

dominated by an elite class that seeks political support from their kinsmen in return for political and economic favors.

The Structure Adjustment Program (SAP) introduced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) failed to meet the expectations in this direction. Instead the program has created more suffering, more unemployment and discontent in the 45% Sub-Saharan countries which embraced it.³⁹

The African's frustration with the program were expressed by the Tanzanian Vice President when he said, "the program has not reduced the poverty or unemployment, instead there is an increase in population living below the poverty line."⁴⁰ The World Bank's external manager, Robert Calderisi, agrees, "if I was an African I could (be angry) with the World Bank and other donor agencies for the SAP because not enough information was given about what was expected in the first place. The thrust was to shift economic activities from the urban to rural areas. And it simply did not work that way."⁴¹ Among the poor societies it will be difficult to achieve meaningful democracy in multi party democracy or political pluralism, as they will always be manipulated. On average more than half of Eastern and Southern Africa's 360 million people live on less than \$1 a day.⁴²

Economics remain a priority on the minds of many Africans, so political platforms will be fewer considerations when electing their leaders. Many countries have realized the need for economic reforms have liberalized their economies and continuously encourage foreign capital investments. But unless the trade barriers seen above are dealt away with, these efforts will come to nothing. President Yoweri Museveni provides a vision in his statement, "if we are to develop, we must evolve institutional models, which liberate us from our backwardness. We must modernize our societies and lay foundation for industrialization."⁴³ This is easier said than done and will require the participation of both the Africans and the international community.

The new world is likely to be economically and technologically driven. This presents a big challenge to Africa because unless it moves in this direction, it will continue being a haven of conflicts. At the same time, the international community cannot also afford to ignore the continent. With a population of 700 million people and a combined GDP estimated at US \$500 billion, Africa has the potential of joining the rest of the world in combating poverty.⁴⁴ This however, can only become a reality if the international community encourages financial development, open its markets to African products without prohibitive tariffs, and reduce its debt currently standing at a staggering US \$219 with some governments spending as much as 40% of their budgets to service it.⁴⁵

ARMS PROLIFERATION

The cold war era saw Africa awash with all kinds of weaponry supplied by the ideological camps to facilitate their hold on to power. Developments of the economy, education, agriculture, etc. were sacrificed at the expense of military aggrandizement with the encouragement of the super powers. The continent by proxy became the battle ground for the ideological camps with each trying to outdo the other.

At the end of the cold war Africa provided weapon manufacturers fertile ground for emptying dormant stocks from their warehouse. The abundance of cheap weapons from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, coupled with the absence of restrictive international laws on arms movement, enabled governments and independent dissident groups to acquire arms. According to International Peace Research, US \$5 million would buy approximately 20,000 AK47 rifles.⁴⁶

The outgoing head of the IMF, Mr. Camdessus, deplores this situation, and during his final statement he urged, "The problem of all the ethnic and tribal wars must be either resolved or at least largely reduced through a big effort by countries that deal in arms to prevent the over militarization of Africa."⁴⁷ The future Mil-to-Mil relationship on the continent should therefore concentrate more on promotion of professionalism in the militaries other than sale of military arsenals.

The effects of this are very evident in the DRC today. The conflict has attracted more than six African countries some with no explainable national interests or threats paused on their territories. The underlying factor is that the countries can easily access cheap war arsenal to enable them to pursue their interests.

The neighbors of DRC, Rwanda and Uganda justify their involvement by the threat to their borders paused by the dissident groups in Eastern Congo. The dreaded *Interahamwe* who carried out the 1990-94 massacres in Rwanda, and the Islamic fundamentalist group, the Allied Democratic Front fighting the Ugandan government, had literally taken over control of eastern Congo. The DRC had failed to establish control over most of its eastern border. After the departure of the international community, which was in charge of the refugee camps in the area, the security situation deteriorated. However, it is debatable whether the two countries exhausted all the diplomatic channels before resorting to armed intervention. The unilateral intervention of Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola without the express authority of the South African Development Cooperation (SADC), the OAU or the UN is promoting a proxy war in the country.

The absence of strong international, regional or sub-regional involvement which would apply strict diplomatic pressures, otherwise referred to as "stand off peacekeeping" by Dr. Metz, allowed the situation to degenerate to the present levels.⁴⁸ Added to the complexities is the readily available manpower in the form of mercenaries. The downsizing of forces the world over has created a pool of readily available mercenaries out to seek a fortune in the conflicts on the continent. Mercenary pilots from Russia, Ukraine and those with infantry skill from SA are a common sight in the Angola and Congo conflicts.⁴⁹

RELIGION

The impact of religion as a source of conflict has not been greatly felt and experienced with exception of Sudan where the Arab north has for the last 17 years battled to impose the Islamic *Sharia* law on the predominantly Christian South. The Muslim north is still adamant concerning the Mohamed's concept of *umma*. This arrangement emphasizes community and political unity among believers with the

sharia law as the legal system. There is lack of separation between state and religion. Recent clashes between the Muslim and Christian Societies in Nigeria after the introduction of *Sharia* law in some of the northern states have left many dead. This is a testimony to the tensions created by such laws in multi-religious communities.⁵⁰

Apart from the resistance to the laws there is a lot of inequities between the north and the south. The north is economically, politically and culturally developed and this poses a fear to the southerners of being dominated. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA/M), aims not only at achieving equity with the north, but a total liberation of Sudan from the Arab control. This strongly held view by the SPLA has thwarted all past efforts at striking a middle position.

The solution of Sudan's problem lies in the leadership of that country recognizing the reality that believers must contend with existence of "non believers" and cater for their demands and expectations as fellow human beings.⁵¹ However, the role of religion in national politics is on the increase. In Senegal, the Mourides, a strong Muslim group who makes 45% of the 8 million people, weld a lot of political and economic authority that no political party can succeed without their support.⁵²

The worrying phenomenon is the spread of Islamic fundamentalism especially in the Great Lakes region and this is mainly due to the fundamentalists non-accommodative nature of their religion and beliefs. Once these can weld political and economic power, then chances of religious intolerance will increase and become a source of conflict.

CHALLENGES TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The demise of the Soviet Union created optimism for a unit of effort by the international community through the United Nations (UN) to address the conflicts on the continent. However, the response of the world body has remained a disappointment and turned out to be even more lukewarm than was the case during the cold war. The failed missions in Rwanda, Somalia, Angola and now the foot dragging to commit troops in DRC are glaring examples.⁵³

The UN has, since the end of the cold war, participated in 14 out of the 25 major conflicts on the continent.⁵⁴ The participation has varied from troop commitment like in the case of Somalia, Angola and Mozambique, and Rwanda to observer missions like in Namibia and Liberia. In most of these missions it has done so in partnership with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) or the sub-regional organs like ECOWAS. There has been some success stories like Mozambique and Namibia but in many others lasting solutions conducive to stable, democratic and economically progressive nations have eluded these efforts.

The UN Article 2.7 provides for nonintervention in matters otherwise considered essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.⁵⁵ The question of the national sovereignty treated as absolute, detrimentally ties down the body's hands in intra state conflicts. The body often reacts after these conflicts have hit alarming levels; Rwanda and Sierra Leone are living examples. The response is normally influenced by the media which, exposes the unique aspect of these conflicts of brutality meted

out by the players/warriors who do not play by any rules and respect no treaties.⁵⁶ While such actions mitigate the human suffering, the approach remains a "treatment of the symptoms" as the underlying factors often remain unsolved.

Such situations usually call for peace enforcement to alleviate human suffering. Countries especially in the developed world are becoming increasingly skeptical about committing their troops especially over a long time where their national interests are not threatened. This view is well expressed by Dr. Graham Allison when during his lecture at Kennedy School he said, "The further removed from our vital national interests one intervention is, the more challenging it becomes to sustain support over time."⁵⁷

The globalization race will leave Africa isolated unless the causes of the conflicts are decisively addressed. The current paradigm shift with voices of "Africans should solve African problems" causes concern, because while the political will may be present, the resources to effectively address the problem are elusive. The conflicts may seem more of an African problem, and may not directly bare on the international community, but the second and third order effects in terms of immigrants, uncontrolled diseases like AIDS and refugee demands will soon be felt beyond Africa.

The UN as the world body needs to act as a vanguard in ensuring that Africa joins the global village. This is a role the world body cannot divest itself of at this point in time. While acknowledging its limited resources and over commitment, the UN in partnership with the OAU, the sub-regional organizations, and individual developed countries could go a long way in influencing events on the continent and changing its image.

In partnership with the OAU and where applicable sub-regional bodies, the international community could facilitate developing mechanisms with emphasis on conflict prevention and management. This would entail entrenching respect for human rights, strengthening state capacities and institutions, promoting economic growth and opening the continent's products to external markets at relatively subsidized tariffs. The UN itself could act as the mouthpiece for Africa in eliminating trade biases and attracting foreign investment on the continent.

The local efforts by the OAU to build mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution, and the external ones like the US establishment of the African Center for Strategic Studies need to be augmented by the UN and not treated with contempt. These institutions provide a window for promotion of democratic institutions and debates among African leaders as a basis for renaissance on the continent. The approach is bearing fruits in Nicaragua and Argentina.

Institutional development is one of the most important objectives that need emphasis. The international community should not limit itself to the cardinal points of free and fair elections, respect for human rights, political pluralism and accountability. Most of the states cannot effectively and efficiently fulfill the functions of a state. Institutions like the judiciary, a well-trained and equipped police force and an effective legislature, all ensure stability. Africa needs a lot of external funding and expertise to make these institutions meaningful.

Past experiences with the external world has left Africans suspicious of any form of external involvement even with good intentions. The UN would be required to play the central role in coordinating actions and programs intended to revamp the continent. The element of being exploited still hangs in the minds of most Africans and for good reasons, integrated action by those willing to help through the UN would reduce this suspicion. A case in point is the efforts by the US, UK and Canada to equip the Africans with capacity in peacekeeping operations through the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) and the French Enhancing Africa Peacekeeping Operations Capacity (RECAM) in the Franco-phone countries.⁵⁸ These programs should not be seen as another phase of scramble for Africa. The need for the UN to identify itself with these programs cannot be overemphasized.

CHALLENGES TO THE OAU AND SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Founded in 1963, the organization was mainly a voice for the continent against colonialism. This is what occupied the organization for the large part of the 20th Century with subcommittees like the Front Line States (FLS) formed to fight apartheid and Portuguese regimes in Southern Africa. Like the UN the OAU emphasized the sovereignty of the independent member states and non-interference in internal affairs.⁵⁹

The OAU too had its hands tied with regard to intra state conflicts. The organization's first bold attempt at peacekeeping was in Chad in 1980-81, which unfortunately was a failure. The mission collapsed when it lost centralized command as contingents turned to home governments for logistical support. The organization has since then shielded away from peacekeeping and restricted itself to observer missions only. It has since conducted missions in Rwanda, Burundi and the Comoros, but these too have often encountered problems.

The significance of OAU seemed to go into oblivion when all the countries achieved independence. Many countries down played its importance and even faulted on membership. Being that conflict resolution was not part of its original agenda, the body had not build mechanisms to deal with the menace. It therefore had no capacity let alone the technical know how or the resources to address the problems.

However, the OAU remains the encompassing body of the continent to which all African countries subscribe regardless of their political camps or affiliations. Its importance as a unifying body on the continent needs recognition and promotion. Despite its past failures, it is highly regarded by the Africans.⁶⁰ What the body needs to do, just like the UN, is to evolve, revisit its charters and embed in mechanisms, which address the current problems on the continent. A strong OAU would be an advantage to both the international community and the continent.

The recent adoption of the declaration establishing within its bodies a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution was a step in the right direction, which should be supported. However, the empowerment of the Secretary General to employ such mechanisms without the undue interference of the Heads of States need to be addressed. This augmented with the ACRI and RECAM

programs would enable the Secretary General to act fast and decisively in the problems on the continent. The need for a *Pax-Africana*, an African peace, established, enforced and consolidated by Africans themselves is no longer debatable.⁶¹ The efforts of the OAU can now be supplemented by the sprouting Sub-Regional organizations like the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the South African Development Cooperation (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for East and Southern States (COMESA). These sub-regional bodies though originally established as economic vehicles, have incorporated in their protocol provisions for conflict resolution after realizing that economic prosperity was impossible without security.⁶² For example, by invoking such a protocol, the COMESA countries were able to impose an economic embargo on Burundi after President Buyoya's coup.

These organizations are not devoid of problems. The foundations are still shaky as most countries are still struggling with political reforms. As observed by Dr. Metz, "African foreign policy and national security tend to be associated with a regime, group or individual leaders more than the nation as a whole."⁶³ This could greatly impact on the stability, viability and ability of these organizations to act in unison and decisively on issues affecting the sub-region. The intervention in the DRC by Zimbabwe and Namibia under the umbrella of SADC without the blessing of the body has already created a rift between SA on one hand, and Zimbabwe and Namibia on the other. Nigeria's involvement in Liberia is another example.

Despite the problems, there is optimism in the viability of the bodies. The COMESA members established a sub-regional bank, the Preferential Trade Area Bank (PTA BANK) as a clearinghouse for economic integration. The EAC has done away with travel restrictions for its people and tariffs on goods from the region highly subsidized to encourage inter state trade. Following in the footsteps is the ECOWAS, which has announced plans for a single currently and free movement by the year 2004.⁶⁴

The economic bodies provide a good vehicle as contact centers for possible external economic policies in support of the continent's economic recovery. The bodies need to be actively involved in designing economic programs for their respective sub-regions if failures like that of SAP are to be avoided. Their ability could be enhanced through linkages to other international economic bodies like European Union (EU), the North American Trade Association (NAFTA) and the *Mercado Comun Del Sur* (MERCUSOR).

The efforts in economic recovery must be supported with improved security and stability of states. The inclusion of the provision for peace operations and conflict resolution in the OAU charter was a step in the right direction. The bold action by ECOWAS in Liberia and now Sierra Leone proved the commitment of the sub-region organizations to the promotion of peace in their regions as echoed by former Nigerian President Babangida. Responding to criticisms for intervening in Liberia he said that, "We are first and foremost reflecting the love we have for our respective countries, our sub-region, Africa, the black world and mankind."⁶⁵ The sub-regions' potential to develop peacekeeping capabilities in their militaries is not doubtful. Countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Botswana have participated in a

number of peacekeeping operations on and off the continent.⁶⁶ Many military officers from the continent have received training from UK, other Western countries and US where peacekeeping operations form part of the training syllabus. The ACRI program and others like it would go a long way in enhancing these capabilities. The need for the sub-regions to take leading role in ensuring security is eminent. The UN participation in Africa since the end of the cold war has scaled down from 40,000 troops and observers in 1993 to a mere 1600.⁶⁷

The prospects for the success of ACRI and its sister programs are high if well coordinated. The new approach of working in partnership with the African countries, as opposed to former approach of designing programs for the Africans to implement, gives a lot of credence to the programs.⁶⁸ This approach is in accordance with the US strategy for regional stability, which emphasizes "enlistment of multilateral organizations and mechanisms as alternatives to direct application of US power and influence."⁶⁹

The programs need to be continuous to and regularly augmented with exercises with emphasis to address lessons learned from past missions. Both the SA "Blue Crane" exercises conducted in April 1999, involving 5,000 soldiers and civilians, and "Natural Fire" by the EAC countries was a great success.⁷⁰ These would greatly enhance joint military cooperation and unity of approach to peacekeeping.

While the military training would address the problem of professionalism, the lack of logistics and interoperability of equipment for most of the countries will present another challenge. The equipment is as diverse as the ideological and colonial camps to which the African countries belonged. Sometimes even within the same country the variety of the equipment is amazing. This re-emphasizes the need for coordinated actions and the role of the UN, which would coordinate the availability of such logistical backup.

The reliance on individual countries from the sub-regions like Nigeria, and SA with both economic and military edge over others risks a possible derailment of the mission with such countries concentrating on promoting own interest and hegemony. The Nigerian experiences in Liberia and South African in Lesotho are vivid examples.⁷¹ The involvement of the UN to ensure that such missions stay on course is critical.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Africa needs not to be dismissed as a continent with endemic, unsolvable conflicts. Much as Africa's poor leadership has been responsible for most of its woes, the international community especially the former colonial masters and the ideological spheres, equally contributed to the trend of events. What Africa requires now is a new approach from the international community with emphasis to developing its capacities and acting in partnership to reverse effects of the last century.

There is need for renaissance on part of the leadership on the continent to feel more accountable to the people they lead and divest from manipulation of systems and societies. With the continent's

diversity in societies social and political conflicts will remain inevitable for sometime. However, the challenge lays in building mechanisms to manage such conflicts constructively and prevent their degeneration to violent levels. The reversal of the causes of these conflicts cannot be achieved overnight. It therefore calls for patience and active participation of both the Africans and the international partners in implementing programs intended to revamp the continent. The political will of the African leaders to address the problems is often hampered by lack of resources and at times technical know-how. The continent will still greatly rely on its international friends to help it in its efforts to find solutions to the conflicts.

The strengthening of the regional and sub-regional bodies and employing them as vehicles need serious consideration. The weaknesses of these bodies should be corrected instead of being used as excuses to deny them prominence.

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